

Central MRS Meeting  
August 22, 2005  
Forsyth County

Counties Present: Davidson, Davie, Guilford, Iredell, Mecklenburg, Moore, Orange, *Randolph, Rowan*, Union  
(Counties that are not currently MRS are italicized.)

State Staff: Tony Troop, Emily Wilkins, Holly McNeill, Heather Thomas

**Agenda**

Introduction

News from Raleigh

New Staff, Legislative Update

Child & Family Team Meetings

Who Facilitates, How do you pay for outside facilitators, How are they working, What do the initial meetings look like, Defining CFTs.

New Staff in Raleigh

- Tomica Williams has taken Amelia Lance's position
- Kate Johnson in Data Management (works with System of Care and IV-E Waiver), and Andrea Stein (temp filling in for Pam)

Legislation

- Appeals Process took out the line saying the substantiation letter had to be delivered by the sheriff.
- Sexual Battery is added to the sexual registry, also will have to provide DNA if convicted.
- Indecent exposure is also added to the registry, more severe penalties if victim under 16.
- \$2 million for additional social workers still in budget.
- Governor's plan for CFT still in.

**Child and Family Team Meetings**

- When Holly began talking to all the counties, one of the things a lot of counties talked about was CFTs.

What do the initial meetings look like?

- Union they have a referral form that social workers can complete for the facilitator. Usually at the first meeting, most of the professionals are from DSS, the others are not there yet.
- Several counties find it hard to get other professionals to the first meeting.
- Mecklenburg use a facilitator if the family is High or Intensive Risk. Found that most families don't have people come to the first meeting.

- Counties that were doing Family Group Conferencing or Team Decision Making are having concerns with holding a meeting to meet timelines rather than having them when there are specific issues.
- Guilford doesn't feel that way, they try to have the first meeting within 2 weeks. The involvement of other professionals varies a lot for the first meeting.

Are CFTs the same as TDM?

- Mecklenburg said No, there are different triggers. TDM is triggered by removal, CFTs are triggered by case plan activities.
- Union does the case plan during CFT
- TDMs are triggered by the removal of a child. (In the 5 counties that were Casey counties.) Also different because of the position of power of the agency. Agency dictates who will be there more in TDM, whereas CFT is more of a meeting for the family.

Who is the facilitator?

- Union fund through IV-E waiver, through Vanguard. Others in the agency are trained to do it.
- Iredell has a person on staff
- Davidson their licensed staff development person does it
- Davie mgmt does it. It is becoming a struggle to do her job and the CFTs as the number of CFTs increase
- Moore have not had any yet, but are working with a community agency to get facilitators
- Guilford has trained some workers.

Family Involvement?

- Union yes, they are bringing people.
- Mecklenburg lot of negotiation from the families they have a confidentiality statement that is signed by participants.
- Iredell they have a lot of high and Intensive cases. They asked the group how much leeway they give the family as to who will be at the meetings. (Ex: A mom with severe mental health issues did not want mental health at the meetings, or any mental health issues even mentioned.)
- Some counties honor requests of families as long as the family is doing the things that are supposed to do.
- Some present the issue by telling families something like This is your meeting, you can invite whoever you want, but if you don't invite so-and-so I am going to have to talk to them anyway. Wouldn't you rather be there when I do talk to them? Have found this works a lot of the time.

Getting Work First to the Meetings

- Most cases Work First is not involved (only about 20-25%)
- No one uses Work First as facilitators.

- Union WF right across the hall, so they just go ask if they will go. Do a search at intake to see if the person is getting service from any other part of agency.
- Moore looking into using WF for relative guardianship. The WF money pays for DSS to contract with an outside attorney.
- Guilford is in the process of contracting with an attorney with waiver money.
- Emily pointed out that even if the family is not already involved with WF, and the family does not qualify for a check, there are other services that WF can help with.
- If the family is eligible for WF services the attorney fee can be coded to child & family enrichment (although this is an allowable expenditure, the Director has to decide how to spend the WF grant).
- Question was asked regarding possible changes coming regarding WF and relatives Emily said there are not any at the state level at this time, but there is some discussion of change at the federal level.
- Do WF Success meetings parallel CFTs? (These are the meeting WF has when a family is near the end of their clock to ensure success after the check stops.)
  - Davidson has their CPS worker go to the meetings if there is CPS involvement.
  - Union and Davidson have done some joint home visits.
  - No counties reported having trouble getting WF to CFT meetings, but some WF say they are having trouble getting CPS workers to Success meetings.

#### Getting Mental Health to the Meetings

- Since services are now by private providers, they are having trouble getting them to the meetings. It takes away from their billable time.
- Union it depends on the issues if they can get MH there (i.e. will it benefit the MH professional to come)
- Iredell most families don't want them there.
- Some work is being done at the state level to facilitate give and take about attending each other's meetings (Rebecca Huffman leading this effort from DSS). However, this will only work for MH getting DHHS money.
- The state is trying to make meetings count for each professional's needs (so that DSS CFT and MH CFT can be the same meeting.)
- Some agencies are working very hard to ensure that the meetings meet all agencies' needs.
- Advice of the 52 for the 48 start talking about CFT's early with families so that they can think about who they would like to involve.

#### Children at CFTs

- Union most of the time there are children there (sometimes they only stay for part of the time if they are younger, and will get bored). Older children participate a lot.

- Mecklenburg have someone watch the young children while the families are in the meetings.
- Try to engage the under 12s to see how much they will say before they take them out of the meeting (prepare them for the meeting beforehand).
- Davidson may not have the actual child there, may have their picture.
- Some counties have grandparents speak for them.

#### Involving Children in Foster Care

- If a child is in Foster Care, how involved are they in the PPAT?
- Union Foster Parents usually bring the child to the meeting, mostly older children.
- Remember that when the Feds do their review they will be looking at how we are treating our LINKS children. How do we involve children whose parents are not necessarily involved?
- Mecklenburg Phoenix project independent living social worker for 16 and 17 year olds that helps advocate for them.
- Iredell has a LINKS coordinator.
- If an agency TPRed a 16 or 17 year old, what resources are there for them? Joan McAllister has noted that some agencies are reluctant to allow 16 and 17 yr olds to identify their own supports. How do counties handle this?
  - Union have the child list all their supports
  - Iredell frequently judges won't TPR because they know child will not be adopted so they still have contact with family.

#### Shared Parenting Meetings

- Some FP won't allow biological parents (BP) in their home, need to find some neutral ground. Seem to be ok with the meetings, just not in their homes.
- Must set yourself up organizationally to ensure safety of everyone involved.
- Sometimes FP go in the other direction and they try to be the social worker and there are almost no boundaries.
- Moore puts the visitation plan in writing and lets BP and FP know that they cannot deviate from that without advance permission from DSS.
- Mecklenburg and Guilford are trying to recruit FP from neighborhoods where kids are being taken into custody.
- Mecklenburg mixed success. Family can develop support in the neighborhood and child is in familiar surroundings, but it is easy for FP to get too involved.
- Guilford does a good job of meeting in the community, but not as good at getting FP from the community. A lot of people are interested, but they don't meet FP requirements.
- Foster/Adopt parents don't like Shared Parenting because their ultimate goal is adoption, regardless of what they said in training.
- Counties also having trouble getting culturally diverse homes.

- Consider this usually it is 210 workers who take the children to Foster Homes. These workers are the least trained in how to re-frame family. In some cases the FP gets a bad idea of BP from the start. This is dependant on the individuals SW s skill because agencies don t train this well.

Keeping the case or transferring it with respect to CFTs.

- Guilford credits being able to have CFT meetings within 2 weeks to 1 worker keeping the case. Worker knows it will be their case, and they start talking about the meeting from Day 1.
- Davidson if the case is complex, they may have a CFT before case decision and the case manager who will get the case is there.
- Mecklenburg would like to have breakouts where workers instead of supervisors could talk to other workers about how it is really going with one worker keeping the case.
- Iredell has concerns regarding quality of services with blended cases (state has not found any issues in monitoring).
- Guilford worker said that Management buy-in is critical if you blend cases they must be flexible to ensure workers don t get overwhelmed.

We will focus on having workers able to breakout and talk to other workers at a future meeting.

No dates for future meetings set, Holly will let folks know as soon as she can set these up.